

to observe the National Moment of Remembrance beginning at 3:00 p.m., local time, on Memorial Day. I encourage the media to participate in these observances. I also request the Governors of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the appropriate officials of all units of government, to direct that the flag be flown at half staff until noon on this Memorial Day on all buildings, grounds, and naval vessels throughout the United States, and in all areas under its jurisdiction and control. I also request the people of the United States to display the flag at half staff from their homes for the customary forenoon period.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-second day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 28.

Remarks on World Trade Week

May 23, 2008

Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House and the South Lawn. It's a joy to welcome entrepreneurs and business leaders and folks who understand the importance of this country being confident enough to work to open up markets for our goods and products and services. I'm—obviously, some of the exporters are pretty good sales men and women. After all, they let you drive a tractor here on the South Lawn. [Laughter] Imagine what the Secret Service was saying.

I'm really pleased to welcome Members of the Congress; Congressmen Petri and Herger are here. Thanks for coming. Petri is here because he's a—he believes in—the Harley Davidson is a product that people around the world ought to be able to drive by making it more affordable—I suspect that's why you're here—as well as some other trucks made in your State.

I want to thank the members of the Cabinet. Thank you all for being such strong advocates of free and fair trade. We've got the Secretary of Agriculture here, Secretary Schafer. His being here sends a message that the American farmer and rancher expects us to work hard to open up markets for the products they grow. So if you're a farmer out there in the heartland, it seems like you'd want somebody working on your behalf here in Washington to be able to make it easier for you to sell your crops. And that's exactly what we're doing in this administration. Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming.

Carlos Gutierrez is the Secretary of Commerce. Trade means commerce. Elaine Chao is here from the Department of Labor. Madam Secretary, thank you. Your presence here is clear recognition that the more products we sell overseas, the more likely it is somebody's going to work.

And today I'm going to spend some time so our fellow citizens understand the importance of trade by connecting trade with products with jobs. Good jobs policy is a good trade policy.

I appreciate very much Sue Schwab here. She's the U.S. Trade Representative. Her job is to open up markets. And I'm going to talk about three trade agreements that she's worked hard to put in place that open up markets for U.S. goods and services. I really appreciate John Veroneau joining us as well. He's the deputy. His job is to also work with the Ambassador to open up markets.

I want to thank Federico Humbert, the Ambassador *de* Panama. I want to thank Lee Tae-sik, Ambassador from South Korea. I want to thank Mariana Pacheco, who is the Deputy Chief of Mission for the Embassy of Colombia. These are three nations I'm going to be talking about. I want to thank you all for coming. It's a—I really appreciate you giving me a chance to talk about your countries in your presence, because I want your leaders to understand the Bush administration and a lot of Members of Congress believe it's in our national interest that we have free and fair trade with your nations.

I thank the representatives of the companies whose products are here. I want to thank the members of the business community.

And thanks for your caring about your country.

But first of all, the—you know, it's a rough economic times. Small-business owners know what I'm talking about; large-business owners know what I'm talking about. It's a period of uncertainty. And one way to deal with uncertainty in the economy is to work from your strengths. One strength, of course, is to trust the American people. And the best way to trust them is to keep your taxes low. I mean, we really don't need to be sending—[*applause*]. If there's uncertain times, there's no worse signal to send, that, you know, we may be raising your taxes. That creates even more uncertainty. There's got to be consistency in the Tax Code so people can plan, so individuals can plan and small business can plan and large businesses can plan. Congress needs to make the tax relief we passed permanent in order to deal with the uncertainty in the economy.

Of course, they got a huge appetite for spending your money, so it shouldn't surprise you that some up there really do want to raise your taxes. And we'll do everything we can and—that—we're not going to let them raise your taxes. But the best signal that Congress could send, for the sake of economic growth and vitality, is that we're going to keep your taxes low by making the tax cuts permanent.

Another thing Congress can do is pass trade agreements that open up markets. You know, 40 percent of our growth last year—during a time of economic uncertainty, 40 percent of the growth came as a result of exports. So when I say, play to our strength, one of the strengths during this period of time is to continue to export products. If the growth that we had during some quarters, recent quarters was as a result of exports, it seems like we ought to be working to create more exports to be able to sell our goods and services into more markets.

And we have an opportunity to do that by opening up markets with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. You know, we trust you to create jobs. The Government ought to trust you by opening up more markets, by making sure the playing field is level for our producers. That's all we want. We just want to be treated fairly in the world.

For some in Washington, trade is a good political issue. In other words, people think it makes good politics to say, "We're not going to let you trade." But what they've got to understand—those voices of pessimism and voices of protectionism must understand that oftentimes, opening up markets means the difference between giving employees a pay raise or a pay cut. The politicians in Washington who use trade as an issue to frighten voters must understand that opening up markets can mean the difference between expanding the number of workers, as opposed to shrinking the number of workers.

And our fellow citizens, I understand, you know, have got concerns about trade. And the reason why we've asked you to bring some of your products here is to remind people that that motorcycle is made by American workers, and that if we're able to more likely sell those motorcycles into Colombia, for example, or Panama or South Korea, that the worker who made that is more likely to get a pay raise or have somebody else join him or her on the floor. That's the practicality of trade.

The interesting thing about trade as an issue, if you really study the issue of free and fair trade, leaders from both parties have been strong advocates for opening up markets. They really have been. I mean, generally this has been a—not nearly as bitter an issue in the past as it is today. You know, I remember reading about John F. Kennedy's stand on trade. He was a strong believer in free and fair trade. My predecessor, President Clinton, worked hard to open up markets. It's interesting that a lot of the people that worked with the President have been here to the White House to, I guess, first, test my temperature to determine whether I really was willing to strongly advocate opening up markets. And then when they realized that they had a steady ally, were willing to go out and declare publicly that they believed that we ought to open up markets.

And yet today, there's just a different attitude evidently. But I want to thank you for helping to try to change that attitude by bringing a practical—some practical thoughts to this debate, kind of fight through all the rhetoric and remind our fellow citizens that—of some of the facts. One, our economy

grows better when we export. Two, there are jobs. When we talk about trade, we're talking about helping people keep work. And it turns out, if you're working for a company that exports goods and services, you make better money. Isn't that an interesting fact? If you're working for a company that sells goods and services overseas, you're going to make more money than your neighbor in a comparable industry.

If you're a farmer—we got some products here, grown right here in the United States of America. If you're a farmer, it seems like you want people to work hard to make it easier for you to sell that orange somewhere else. Increased demand means it's more likely you'll be able to sell your crop.

Trade is in the interests of the working people here in America, pure and simple. Trade is in the interests of small-business owners and farmers and ranchers, pure and simple. And that's why I'm a strong believer that the United States Congress needs to pass trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea.

Now let me give you some of the practical lessons of why. Take dairy products. There's a 20-percent tariff on dairy products from the United States into Colombia; 36 percent into Korea. That means that the cost of that dairy product—chunk of cheese—you know something about cheese, Petri, in Wisconsin—a chunk of cheese is going to be 20 percent more expensive, which makes it harder to sell that product.

When you say, level the playing field, what I'm talking about is reducing tariffs on goods and services, which makes it easier to sell. In other words, it's less expensive. The quality is the same. We're really good at what we make and what we grow. The quality is the same, but the price is less, which makes it more likely something is going to be purchased.

Fruits, oranges—these oranges right here are taxed at 15 percent going into Colombia—they're 15 percent more expensive, 30 percent more in South Korea, and 15 percent more in Panama. Broccoli—they got a really high tariff on broccoli at my father's house. [Laughter] But there also happens to be one—15 percent in Colombia, 27 percent in South Korea, and 15 percent in Panama.

So those are percentages, but you need to think about the percentage in terms of, it's that much more expensive to buy. And sometimes if you're shopping for an orange, that 15-percent differential means you're not going to buy it. Motorcycle—that motorcycle right there is 20 percent more expensive in Colombia, 8 percent more in Korea, and 15 percent more in Panama.

And so the purpose of a trade agreement is to reduce those tariffs, is to make the products less expensive. So if we get the deal done with Colombia, that motorcycle will be \$4,000 less expensive. The great quality of Harley will be the same. There will be no diminution of how cool one is when they drive a Harley. [Laughter] But it's going to be easier for somebody to buy it.

This Case tractor—by the way, manufactured in Fargo, North Dakota—called a Case IH, will be \$15,500 cheaper in Colombia. That could be a significant difference when it comes to somebody buying that tractor. And I hope the Case workers hear me loud and clear: The cheaper that is for somebody to buy in Colombia, the more work you're going to have.

The reason I brought these products here is, it means somebody is making them today and is going to be able to make them tomorrow if we'd level that playing field. And let me tell you why I talk about leveling the playing field. The first vote coming up is Colombia. I say, the first vote coming up is Colombia—you might remember, the vote has never been allowed to come up. The Speaker of the House pulled a parliamentary maneuver that sent a bad signal, and so it hasn't come up yet.

Our job is to say, let the people vote, let the Members of Congress vote. I like our chances if they let the Members of Congress vote. Congress has a way of sorting through all the noise and all the pessimism and often-times reaches the right conclusion.

Most of the goods coming from Colombia enter America duty free—isn't that interesting—as a result of actions of Congress in the past. Most goods that Colombia makes comes to our country without any tax. And I've just described to you, the goods and services we send to Colombia are taxed. And that, frankly, doesn't seem very fair to me. It didn't

seem fair to the Colombian Government either. They all—they agree with me: Let's just treat each other fairly.

Their goods are not taxed; our goods are. It seems unfair to me. And people of Congress should understand how unfair it is to the workers in their districts or the farmers in their districts or the people who are working hard for a living in their districts that count upon selling goods overseas.

So the agreement we reached basically says that those oranges will go in duty free. Some of the products will go in duty free immediately; some of them will be phased in over time; but nevertheless, the playing field will be level. So here you hear, free and fair trade; that's the definition of free and fair trade. Colombia treats us just like we treat them. That's fair.

Secondly, the Colombia free trade vote, like these other free trade votes, have got national security implications. Colombia has got a very bold leader named President Uribe, who is a reformist. Panama has got a strong leader, who, by the way, went to Texas A&M University. He's a reformist. I had the honor of meeting the South Korean President at Camp David—first South Korean President to have come to Camp David—and I did so for a reason. Because I wanted to send a strong signal about our friendship with the people of South Korea. He's a strong, strong leader. All these leaders have got a clear vision about enhanced prosperity in their country. They care deeply about their people.

President Uribe has got a unique challenge in Colombia. He's facing a group of narcotraffickers who are violent, who use force to achieve political objectives, who are supported by some of the countries in the neighborhood. They're a threat to peace inside Colombia, and they provide a threat to the United States, in the sense that they—to the extent that they facilitate drug trafficking. It makes it here. And yet the President has stood strong in dealing with these folks. He is a clear example of a leader who has set the—an agenda that is bold, and he's following through with that agenda.

If we were to turn our back on Colombia by rejecting the free trade agreement, it would send a terrible signal to leaders willing

to be courageous. It would send a bad signal to our friends. And in the case of Colombia, it would send a bad signal to the voices of false populism in South America. It's in our economic interest that we pass trade agreements. Oh, I know there's great debate about that. But I hope that people listen to the facts and understand the practical consequences of opening up markets for the products made here in the United States. Then they'll understand why all of us are so passionate about making sure we're treated fairly.

There's also a significant national security concern when it comes to America turning its back on friends. The region needs democracy; the region needs rule of law; the region needs stability; and the region needs strong leaders like President Uribe. And a rejection of the free trade agreement with Colombia will undermine that which the leader—the region needs.

It's interesting, I've been—you know, I constantly talk to fellow leaders on the telephone, and as you know, I've been traveling as well. And the—I've been asked quite frequently, "Why is it that your Congress won't pass a free trade agreement with Colombia, for starters?" And they ask that question first with amazement. They can't believe the great United States of America is not confident enough or wise enough to level the playing field when it comes to U.S. goods and services.

And once the tone of amazement passes, then there's this serious tone of concern—concerned about the United States becoming protectionist, concern about the United States losing its confidence when it comes to the entrepreneurial spirit that has made us great, concerned that we really don't seem to care about the plight of others. Because trade helps lift people out of poverty. Trade is a powerful engine for change.

And all I can tell them is, is that politics is too strong right now. But I also tell them, I haven't given up hope. I haven't given up hope that that Colombia free trade agreement is going to make it to the floor of the Congress, and with your help, I hope you get it there. I haven't given up hope that the people will recognize that obstructionism is not leadership, that obstructing an important piece of legislation, not even allowing it to

come to the floor for a vote, is not what the people expect.

And so my call on the leadership in the House is to let this trade agreement get to the floor; let the representatives of the people decide; let there be an open and honest debate about the merits of this piece of legislation—the merits from an economic perspective and the merits from a national security perspective. And then when you pass a Colombia free trade bill, we go to South Korea and Panama and get those bills passed. And then we can go to the people who are making these products here and say, we did the job you expected us to do.

Thank you all for coming. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Martin Torrijos Espino of Panama; and President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 8261—National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2008 *May 23, 2008*

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

National Hurricane Preparedness Week highlights the vital importance of being prepared when natural disasters strike.

Tropical storms can cause destruction over entire regions and claim the lives of many of our citizens. We can help reduce vulnerability in our communities by encouraging all citizens to be prepared and to work together. Maintaining emergency supply kits and family communication plans, and knowing what to do in an emergency can help save lives. For more information on hurricane preparedness, Americans can visit ready.gov and fema.gov to find checklists and other valuable resources to help them get prepared.

My Administration continues to support efforts to strengthen how Americans prepare for and respond to disasters. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration works to predict and track storms so that citi-

zens are more aware of potential storms. The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has improved communication between Federal, State, local government, and the private sector in order to help citizens stay informed and receive the help they need. By working together, we can better prepare for, respond to, and recover from hurricanes and reduce the harm to our citizens and our communities.

As hurricane season approaches, we also express our gratitude to the volunteers and first responders who help their fellow citizens in their time of need.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 25 through May 31, 2008, as National Hurricane Preparedness Week. I call upon government agencies, private organizations, schools, and the media to share information about hurricane preparedness. I also urge all Americans living in vulnerable coastal areas to take appropriate measures and precautions to protect themselves, their homes, and their communities against the effects of hurricanes.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:50 a.m., May 28, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 29. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.
